



“Imagining and Building Feminist Movements for the Future”

Just Associates’ bold 4-year initiative aimed at strengthening women’s leadership and organizational power to make a better, more peaceful world possible.

About Just Associates (JASS)

JASS is a network of justice activists, scholars and popular educators in 13 countries worldwide committed to increasing women’s voice, visibility and collective organizational power to advance a more just, equitable and sustainable world. We are known for our pioneering advocacy and human rights training, strategies, action research and accessible how-to materials. JASS programs aim to expand grassroots empowerment and public engagement; strengthen activists’ and organizations’ political and strategic capacities; build bridges and alliances across boundaries of power and privilege shaped by class, gender, race, age, location, sexuality and other factors; and communicate fresh knowledge about the messy and inspiring realities of social change. Regionally-based JASS teams draw upon 20 years of experience with social justice organizations and movements in dozens of countries. Our approach is forged from our network’s tried-and-tested activism, web of local-to-global partnerships and the opportunities for connection created by evolving global communications technologies.

JASS’ Movement-Building Initiative (MBI)

Launched in 2006, the MBI emerged in response to widely expressed frustrations with the limited impact of policy and technical solutions on inequality in the face of growing conservative backlash. In the first phase, 4-day movement-building institutes bring together a diverse, cross-generational range of women leaders and activists – from the community to policy levels – to analyze, reflect and strategize. From there, we work in partnership with a variety of women’s groups to carry out long term learning and action strategies to strengthen women’s collective impact on public opinion and decision-making from the household to the global level.

“Institutes” in Action: Held in Panama in September 2006, the first regional institute—for Mesoamerica—surpassed our expectations of the potential for bridge-building across key differences and the commitment to renewal. Intensive historical reflection and analysis generated fresh insights, passion, bold proposals and an inspiring vision for rebuilding the social fabric tattered by a decade of economic restructuring that has sharpened inequality and fueled social conflict and violence. Bolstering women’s critical but undervalued roles, this vision is about reshaping community around the values of reciprocity, caring and inclusion. Participants defined and put into action a fast-moving strategy including:

Women’s Transformation Watch/ Women crossing the line: Recognizing that women’s efforts—both small and large—to challenge gender subordination are often invisible to the public eye, the Watch spotlights and reinforces women’s local actions during political crises or around key regional issues, by mobilizing regional solidarity and media attention. The Watch mobilizes collective action to support and draw attention to the women most directly affected by injustices and shine the light on the inspiring ways women speak out and defend themselves and their communities. In this way, the communications piece of the Watch is about recasting feminism and women’s rights to appeal to broader society. Within 2 months of the Panama institute, a regional women’s election watch was organized around the high-stakes Nicaraguan elections, highlighting women’s demands and roles as candidates and citizens. The second watch took place in Oaxaca in April alongside the Gathering of Women in Resistance, to give visibility and support to the Mexican women on the front-lines against growing repression by the newly installed government. The next watch, in

September, will feature Costa Rican women who have mobilized communities and built extraordinary alliances among feminists, environmental justice, labor rights activists, and small business leaders to halt the ratification of the Central America Free Trade Agreement; the action will coincide with a national plebiscite on the matter. Plans are also in the works for watch around the November Guatemalan elections, where one of the participants in this initiative is a vice-presidential candidate. Given epidemic levels of gender violence (femicide) in that country, the watch will feature the voices, actions and priorities of indigenous women and women's rights leaders whose efforts to participate meaningfully are often invisible during electoral processes. A key feature of the watch is to document how these moments enable women facing different kinds of discrimination to find common cause and build collective power to make a difference.

Sea Change Feminist Leadership School: Comprehensive training, political education and mentoring for a diverse cross-section of women activists have been identified as urgent needs by many women's groups. *Sea Change* is about strengthening women's political skills and strategies through individual and collective learning and action grounded in feminist theory, human rights, and basic economic and budget skills. Drawing on popular education methodologies, the school also aims to inspire hope and energy. *Sea Change* will be launched regionally in September 2007 in collaboration with several women's organizations dedicated to quality education and training and will be adapted as needed at national levels.

Petatera¹ Radio and Communications Strategy: "Radio Petatera" was created in collaboration with Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE), and kicked off with a 10 hour webcast of local and international commentary during the Nicaraguan elections. The radio show is a regular feature for each Watch and other select events. The broader communications strategy includes a regular electronic bulletin, *La Petatera*, an interactive website, and eventual multi-media documentation of all the activities of the MBI. Given the vital role of communications in this initiative, we are planning to host a conference with women in the media in Guatemala in November 2007.

More regional institutes: JASS teams are preparing to kick-off the next two MBIs in South East Asia in June and in Southern Africa in October. **South East Asia:** The June workshop will bring together young women from Indonesia and East Timor and focus on new media; then, in early 2008, JASS will convene a larger regional institute for women of all ages working to address the combined challenges of poverty, labor exploitation, migration and trafficking facing women. **Southern Africa:** Building on the 2006 recommendations from the African Feminist Forum and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa's project to "Renovate Women's Movements in Southern Africa", the Southern Africa process focuses on women living with or engaged in activities to address HIV/AIDS. This effort begins with an institute in November and over time, aims to make African women living with HIV visible, influential and at the top of the agenda for the next Global AIDS conference in Mexico in 2008

Global Learning and Communications Agenda: Tying this multi-regional initiative together is a global learning agenda guided by an evolving set of critical questions: *What do "women's movements" look like in this NGO-dominated moment? How can we build movements agile enough to respond to women's pressing needs but also guided by a long-term strategy to advance rights at multiple levels? How can we build more effective cross-movement alliances?* Through multimedia documentation and our partnership with FIRE, this process provides women new skills while also communicating creatively about women's movements and equality agendas through video and radio. JASS' ongoing partnership with the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), particularly in the action-research initiative, *Where's the Money for Women's Rights?* and *Money and Movements*, provides crucial insights, networks and a strategic platform for the JASS movement-building initiative.

¹ The women involved in this effort call themselves "Petateras" (weavers) in reference to the task of rebuilding women's movements as one of weaving the threads of women's lives together for strength and durability, and jointly working to reshape the social fabric to be inclusive, caring and respectful of the dignity of all people.